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Mentor's Introduction

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Who is the student and who the master? At the Ph.D. level this is a real question for me. But when presented with a proposition that I held to be highly questionable by a young Mr. Blandy, I was soon convinced that this relationship would be a partnership in which I might well become the junior member. His conviction about the capabilities of a group of human beings (the allegedly retarded) that are typically consigned to the garbage heap of education was so genuine that I knew this was the chance to test my own prejudices.

Fortunately (coincidence is the heavenly manna that provides sustenance for many of our enterprises) we had a facility (our Logan Elm Press) which could be used and a vehicle (Blissymbolics) to carry the investigation. We were both disappointed (a euphemism for disgusted) with the literature which prescribed learning activities better designed for training animals than for educating humans of whatever capabilities. My "advice" became encouragement to take on the field and to employ a research methodology appropriate to the questions being asked and the circumstances of their asking.

It took Blandy's courageous imagination to take advantage of the conditions presented in order to design and carry out a study which eventually showed that four human beings had been erroneously tagged by our system, and that with an attitude that aims for normalization rather than ghettoization they could achieve goals the system said they shouldn't. Humanism isn't a research method, but it is an attitude about research that can pay off when tied to a speculative mind.